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## HUMBLE ATTEMPT



SUBSTANTIATE THE LEGITIMACY

OF

## INFANT BAPTISM,

AND OF

## SPRINKLING,

AS A

SCRIPTURAL MODE OF ADMINISTERING THAT ORDINANCE.

IN THREE LETTERS,

ADDRESSED

TO THE REVEREND MR. PRIESTLEY,

WESLEYAN METHODIST MISSIONARY,

AND CHAIRMAN OF THE NOVA SCOTIA DISTRICT,

By GEORGE JACKSON.

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"It is no wonder that the great mass of children are so wicked, when so few are put under the care of Christ by humble, praying, believing parents. Let every parent that fears God, bring up his children in that fear; and by baptism let each be dedicated to the Holy Trinity. Whatever is solemnly consecrated to God, abides under his protection and blessing.

"Those who are dipped or immersed in water in the name of the Holy Trinity, I believe to be evangelically baptized. Those who are washed or sprinkled with water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, I believe to be equally so: and a repetition of such a baptism, I believe to be profane."

*The Rev. Dr. A. Clarke.*

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MAY 27 1958

## Letter I.

Reverend and very dear Sir,

WHEN a person addresses the public on a controverted question, it requires some apology to screen him from the imputations which may originate in those suspicions and passions to which human nature is subject, and which will seldom fail to call in question, both the purity of his motives, and the propriety of his proceedings. Under these circumstances, I feel peculiarly happy that I can allege, that the following pages owe their existence entirely to your solicitation; and I feel myself equally happy, that, as far as your disposition, and life are known, this allegation will prevent any one from attributing their appearance, to any other motives, than those which become a Minister of the Gospel of Peace. You wished me to give a few reasons for the proceedings of those who administer the sacrament of Baptism to infants; and overcame my objections, by pleading the necessity of a few remarks being made on this subject, and that you had not yourself leisure for the undertaking. With this request, therefore, I shall attempt to comply, disclaiming any intention to provoke controversy, and attempting to bear in mind that maxim, which, with christians, ought to have all the force of principle, "The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." It has been observed, that, "Constituted as man is, dissonance of mind will ever more or less obstruct coalescence of affection. To investigate truth therefore, provided it be done soberly and dispassionately, is at least to subserve the cause of charity."

I. Those whose cause I am engaged to advocate, look upon baptism as an initiatory rite, or a ceremony essential to a person's becoming a member of the visible Church of Christ. This they attempt to prove as follows:

1. Baptism under the gospel, is a substitute for circumcision under the patriarchal and mosaic dispensations, which, both to Jewish infants, and to heathen proselytes and their children, was an initiatory ceremony.(a)

That baptism is a substitute for circumcision it is presumed, is evident from Gal. 3. 27. In the context the apostle shews the insufficiency of the law to give righteousness.(b) In the 24th verse he shews, however, that it was not useless, being a schoolmaster to bring them to Christ, for a proof of which he appeals to their own experience;(c) and then, in the following verse, he adds, "for as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ;" and showing their privileges in consequence, he subjoins, "and if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."(d) When we consider that it was against the Jewish law, and against circumcision as initiatory to its observance, that St. Paul principally pleads in this epistle,(e) this passage is peculiarly striking; for he proves, that without it, by the ordinance of baptism, they were initiated into all the privileges of christianity, which he comprises in that expression—"Ye are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

(a)Gen. 17, 11, 14, 34, 15, 24. Exod. 12, 48. Jennings' Jewish Ant. p. 64.—Edin. 1808. Plenry's Manners of the Israelites, by Dr. A. Clarke, p. 271, London, 1819. (b)v. 31. (c)v. 26. (d)v. 29. (e)see ch. 5. 2, &c.

This passage also shows, that St. Paul considered the gospel as but a continuation of the Abrahamic covenant. That Abraham was justified by faith, and not by the deeds of the law, is his great argument against the Judaizers in his epistles to the Romans, and to the Galatians; and when we call to mind, that he considers the promise of God as the object of Abraham's faith, and that he calls believers "the children of the promise," and "Abraham's seed according to the promise," it is evident that he did not consider the covenant, in any sense, changed in its nature, faith, and faith alone, being, in each dispensation, the condition of justification.(f) That he considered the initiatory ceremony changed, we suppose to be already proved by the passage above quoted: for he pleads against circumcision, and declares that the Galatians had "put off Christ" by being baptized into Him, and believing in Him, which, as adults, was the only proper qualification for baptism. By faith they were made partakers of the blessings of the gospel; by baptism they were initiated into the christian church.

We find a similar mode of argumentation pursued in the apostle's epistle to the Colossians, ch. 2. 11 and 12 verses. In opposition to the philosophizing and judaizing teachers with which this church was infested, and against whom the apostle warned them, verse 8, he informed them, that they were "complete in him which is the head of all principality and power." The process by which they had been made thus "complete in him," was not by being literally circumcised, but by being the happy partakers of that change denoted, or figured, by circumcision, called "the circumcision made without hands," and which consisted "in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ," through a "faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him (Jesus) from the dead." "And you, continues the apostle, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiv'en you all trespasses."(g) This is evidently one argument by which he proves, that they ought not to "touch, taste, or handle," what he calls "the rudiments of the world, " "van philosophy," or to be "subject to" (Jewish) "ordinances;"(h) the first of which was circumcision, and concerning which, the Judaizers taught, "Unless ye be circumcised, and keep the law of Moses ye cannot be saved."(i)

But the apostle advances another argument. In verse 13 he proves, that circumcision was unnecessary, because they had already been initiated into the church by baptism; for they were also "buried with him by baptism, wherein also they were risen with him through the faith of the operation of God." Circumcision was therefore unnecessary for them, because they had partaken both of the outward and visible sign, and the inward and spiritual grace, or, to use the language of the Saviour, they were born both "of water and of the spirit," and were consequently heirs of "the kingdom of God."

2. That baptism is an initiatory ceremony they attempt to prove further, by a consideration of the command of our Saviour, and the proceedings of his apostles.

When our Lord gave his disciples their commission, prior to his ascension into heaven, he commanded them to "Go and teach (disciple) all nations, baptizing them in (into) the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."(j)

That the apostles considered this command as constituting baptism an initiatory ceremony, they appose evident from the following considerations. When on the day of Pentecost, those who "were prick'd in the heart," cried "men and brethren what shall we do?" Peter answered, "Repent and be baptised every one of you;" and we are informed, that "they that gladly received the word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls."(k) The conduct of the same apostle was similar, in the case of Cornelius and his family. When they had "received the Holy Ghost," he asked, "can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptised, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" and he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus."(l)

(f)v. 26, and ch. 8. 6, 14, 17; and also Rom. 11. 17, &c. where the apostle proves that the believing Gentiles had succeeded to the privileges of the unbelieving Jews, by being grafted into the good olive tree. (g)verses 12, 13. (h)v. 20.—(i)Acts 15. 1. (j)Matt. 28. 19. (k)Acts 2. 38, 41. (l)Acts 10. 47, 48. See also also the case of Sam, ch. 9. 18. of the Eunuch, ch. 8. 30, 38, and of the Jailer, ch. 16. 33.

I beg leave to close my remarks on this part of our subject by a brief extract from Dwight's Body of Divinity, on John 3. 5. "Except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." "To be born of water," Dr. D. observes, "is to be baptized. To be born of the spirit is to be regenerated. The kingdom of God, is a phrase used in the gospel, in a twofold sense; and denotes his visible, and his invisible kingdom; or the collection of apparent, and the collection of real saints. The indispensable condition of entering the former, or visible kingdom, is here made, by our Saviour, Baptism. The indispensable qualification for admission into the invisible kingdom, is regeneration; the great act of the spirit of God, which constitutes men real saints. Baptism, therefore, is here made by Christ a condition absolutely necessary, to our authorized entrance into his visible church."(m)

II They look upon baptism as a ceremony, whereby the subject of it, whether an infant, or an adult, is dedicated to God and his service.

We cannot so far deprecate the Almighty in the estimation of mankind, as to teach, that he prescribes ceremonies for the mere form and parading attendant on their observance. And we apprehend, that all the unfounded objections of unbelievers to the observances of the Jewish ritual, are entirely inapplicable to the ceremonies of the gospel, which have been so justly celebrated for their simplicity. We have nothing ceremonial, but the Sacrament of the Lord's supper, and Baptism. In the former, we commemorate his meritorious sufferings at the price of our redemption; and the latter reminds us of that purity, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." This will not be disregarded by an enlightened and sincere adult, when he partakes of this ordinance. He will remember, that, so many as are baptized into Jesus Christ, are baptized into his death; and that as Christ after his death was "buried," so he, by baptism, takes upon himself the obligation to be dead and buried unto sin; "that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so he also, (as one spiritually raised,) should walk in newness of life.(n)

That a believing parent, who was convinced that it was his duty, would present his child unto God, under the influence of similar sentiments, and second his offering, by using every endeavour in his power to instil into it's mind a sense of

(m)vol. 6. p. 287. Baynes' Ed 1819.

(n)Rom. 6. 3, 4. To be "baptized into the death of Jesus Christ," is to be initiated into the blessings procured by his death; (Gal. 3. 27.) and as he "was manifested to destroy the works of the devil," those who are thus interested in his death, are "dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord;" (v. 11.) and as all who believed, and were baptized, "received the gift of the Holy Ghost," (Acts 2. 38.) a consequence of which was, that they were spiritually "dead to sin," they are said, verse 4, to be "buried with him by baptism into death." As the death then is spiritual, and not an effect of baptism, but of receiving the Holy Ghost, so is the burial, as is also the resurrection, and the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, are the figures here introduced by the apostle, to bring to the remembrance of the Romans, the obligations which they had taken upon themselves, when they were "baptized into Christ's death." Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. That these expressions are to be figuratively understood, I think is evident from the 5 and 6 verses—"For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall also be in the likeness of his resurrection. Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." With no more propriety can the word "buried" be construed to signify immersion, than the words "planted" and "crucified," which would certainly be very improperly applied thus, but which are figuratively applied by St. Paul, to denote the same great change, viz: the death and burial of the old man, or principle of sin, which he here personifies, and the consequent spiritual resurrection of the Romans to "newness of life."

I trust, Sir, that these remarks will be sufficient to show, that the figure here used by the apostle is not the burial of the body, by immersion in baptism, but the burial of the body of our Lord, after his crucifixion. In attempting to ascertain how far I am accompanied by the authority of commentators, I was happy to find Dr. Coke of the same opinion.

it's obligations, as it became able to comprehend them, and feel their influence; I think it scarcely necessary to prove. This anxiety for its spiritual welfare, and a sense of it's being his duty to train it "up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," would unite to stimulate him to this, and the language of his heart would be, "as for me and my house we will serve the Lord."

That the apostles of our Lord viewed baptism as a ceremony of dedication, I think is already proved; especially by the remarks on Rom. 6. 3, 4. Should any doubt remain, however, it may probably be removed by a consideration, that it appears to have been under the influence of this conviction, that it was at all used by them as an incentive to holiness of life. Again, it appears to be owing to the apostles looking upon it in this light, that they promised the gift of the Holy Ghost to those adults who repented and were baptized, for this blessing is only granted to those, who "present themselves a living sacrifice unto God." (o)

But again; when we consider baptism as a substitute for circumcision under the law, which, it is hoped, has been proved; not the least doubt can remain. For it was the ceremony in which the Jews received the seal of the covenant made between God and them, in which he engaged to "be their God, and that they should be his people." (p) They were by their circumcision sealed as the Lord's, and by their parents given up to Him. The above passage St. Paul quotes, to prove to the Corinthians, the necessity of a separation from Idolaters, which plainly evinces that he viewed the subject in the same light; for seeing that we have to do with a Being "with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning," we must look upon the former and the present dispensations, as only different dispensations of the same covenant, for otherwise they could not admit of an interchange of conditions and promises. The undeniable inference, therefore, is, that baptism has succeeded to the place of circumcision, and that consequently, it is a ceremony in which it's recipient is dedicated unto God.

I am not aware, Sir, that the opponents of infant baptism look upon the ordinance of baptism in any other points of view than those in which I have here attempted to represent it, viz. as an initiatory and dedicatory ceremony; but I need not inform you, that they oppose most of the arguments by which I have attempted to prove these positions, and of course, I trust, that this latter will not be considered extraneous. I have no doubt, but that I shall find it useful to refer to the present communication, as I proceed, in addition to the advantage of having the subject, in some sense, systematically arranged.

Sincerely praying, that however we may have been dedicated unto God, we may be "A living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto Him, which is our reasonable service."

I am,

Revd. and very dear Sir,

Your's most respectfully,

And affectionately,

GEORGE JACKSON.

Rockville, Westmoreland, N. B. }  
May 8th, 1822.

(o) See Acts 2. 23. 19. 1, 6 — Rom. 12. 1. 15. 16. Titus 3. 5. (p) Lev. 26. 12.

## Letter II.

Reverend and very dear Sir,

**H**AVING, in the preceding letter, attempted a representation of the design of baptism, as far as it relates to infants, and to prove that it accords with that of Christ and his apostles, I shall, in this, attempt to prove, III. That it is with propriety that we consider the infant children of believers as fit subjects for baptism.

Before I proceed, however, it may not be improper, to bespeak both the attention and the candour of those who are unacquainted with the nature of this discussion, by observing; that, at its commencement, as it regards absolute certainty from the scriptures, both the advocates, and the opponents, of Infant Baptism, are exactly on a level. For as they contain no express declarations either for or against the practice, while we confine our inquiries to the evidence which they furnish; our decision must, of necessity, turn in favour of those who produce that which is the most probable. This being done, I proceed to observe,

1. That the ordinance of baptism does not appear to have originated with our Lord and his apostles, but to have been adopted by them from the Jewish Church. The scriptures appear to contain plain intimations of its being in use among the Jews, prior to its being practised by John the Baptist. The question of those who were sent by the Jews to inquire whether he were the Messiah? plainly intimates this. They asked him "Why he baptized if he were not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?" (q) In this question, they evidently speak of the ceremony without surprise, which would not have been the case, had it been novel, and the only thing which they question, is John's right to baptize, seeing he was "neither the Christ, nor that prophet." Here they evidently allow, that it was right that men should be baptized, and, if John had been "the Messiah," or "that prophet" promised, Deut. 18. 15, 18, whom they supposed to be a different person, it would have been proper for him to have administered the ordinance, as he was then doing independent of the authority of the Sanhedrim, which, in the baptism of proselytes at their admission to the privileges of the Jewish religion, was always considered necessary.(r) Again; in every place where it is mentioned, it is introduced without explanation, and as a thing with which those who are addressed were perfectly familiar. But again; on account of our Lord's baptizing more disciples than John, he evidently anticipated the envy and malice of the Pharisees, and retired into Galilee to evade them.(s)—He knew that they did not believe in him as the Messiah, and of course would be enraged when they heard, that he had, as they supposed, assumed an authority which did not belong to him, and which was giving him, as they feared, a dangerous popularity. From this it appears, that they considered baptism a ceremony by which men were legally constituted disciples. "Some, indeed, reckon this ceremony of initiation among the inventions of the Talmudists; but when, (in addition to what has been said above,) it is considered that the Jews always held the practices of the christians in abhorrence, it will appear highly probable that the rite was derived to them from the usage of their ancestors, before the coming of Christ."(t)

I have made these remarks, Sir, for the purpose of removing objections against the historical proof with which we are favoured; that the Jews baptized both the proselytes which they made from heathenism, and their children, and which

(q) John 1. 25. (r) See Dr. A. Clarke's Com'y. on John 1. 25. (s) John 4. 1, 2.

(t) Hart's Bible Dic. article "baptism."

is briefly summed up, by an English prelate, in the following words—" The truth is, that baptism was constantly practised by the Jews from the time of Moses. For they baptized as well as circumcised every proselyte that came over to them from the nations. And this baptism, it has been shown by those best skilled in Jewish customs, was administered to infants as well as to grown persons." On the subject of baptism being a ceremony among the Jews, Dr. Doddridge observes, " It is strange to me that any should doubt of this, when it is plain, from express passages in the Jewish law, that no Jew who had lived like a Gentile for one day, could be restored to the communion of this church without it. Compare numb. 19. 19 and 20, and many other precepts relating to ceremonial pollutions, in which may be seen, that the Jews were rendered incapable of appearing before God in the tabernacle or temple, till they were washed either by bathing or sprinkling."

As, therefore, it appears to have been adopted by our Lord from the Jewish Church, without any restriction as to the subjects, in his command to his disciples, Matt. 28. 19, we infer, that infants are proper subjects for christian baptism.

I am well aware, Sir, that it has been objected, that this command makes teaching preparatory to baptizing, and that infants being incapable of being taught, are therefore incapable of being baptised. A proper translation, however, happily proves the contrary; and to this we are compelled, to avoid what Mr. Wesley calls, " vain tautology; senseless repetition." The original word, *metathessete*, it is well known, ought to be rendered, " Make disciples of," or proselyte, and the passage should be translated—" Go ye and disciple all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." (u) It, therefore, appears, that the command to " make disciples of," or to proselyte, " all the world," extended the commission of the apostles, to the Gentiles, whereas prior to this, it had been confined to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, (v) and their discipling succeeded to the proselyting under the law, as it was to be performed in the same manner; and of course, when the parents were baptized the children were also to be admitted by baptism, as was the case in the Jewish church. In conformity with this idea, it is, that we read, that Peter exhorted the adults to " repent and be baptized," and at the same time declared, " the promise was unto them and their children," and of the households<sup>o</sup> of believers being baptized by the apostles. (w) This explanation, in my humble opinion, satisfactorily accounts for there being no express command, either for, or against infant baptism, in the scriptures. The ceremony being adopted from the Jewish church, rendered it entirely unnecessary for our Saviour to say any thing on the subject, and created a necessity for him to forbid infant baptism, if they were not to receive it, owing to its being always implied in the proselyting or discipling, of the nations. Infant baptism appears to be just in a similar predicament with the christian Sabbath. There is no command, in the New Testament, for the observance of the Sabbath, under the gospel dispensation, on the first day of the week. But that the apostles appropriated one day in seven, to the worship of God, though they changed it from the seventh to the first day of the week, we have satisfactory proof by inference from several passages of scripture, and we have also the direct testimonies of the earliest ecclesiastical writers; and I hope to make it appear, that the inferences, from the scriptures, in favour of infant baptism, are as forcible as those in favour of the observance of the first day of the week as a constant and perpetual day of rest and worship among christians.

(u) On the subject of the households mentioned in the scriptures, which were baptized by the apostles, it may be observed; they were five in number, viz. those of Cornelius, the jailer, Lydia, Crispus, and Stephanus; and that it is rather improbable that there should not have been infants in some of them. It does not rest with us, however, as has been supposed, to prove that there were, but that, if there were, the probabilities are in favour of their being baptized by the Apostles.

(v) See Parkhurst on the word; Wesley's Notes, and his works, vol. 18, p. 409, Ed. 1. 1812. (w) Matt. 10. 1, 6.—(v) See Acts 2. 38, 39, 10. 47, 48, 16. 15, 18, 16. 8, 1 Cor. 1. 16.

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But again. The objection that a want of faith, incapacitates infants for baptism, destroys itself by proving too much. First, it charges the Almighty with folly in ordaining circumcision, which was "a seal of the righteousness of faith," to be administered to Jewish infants at eight days old, at which time they were certainly incapable of exercising faith. And secondly; this reasoning brings, in its train, all the horrors of infant damnation. For if our Lord's commands include infants, and forbid their being baptised, because they have not faith, it also includes them, and forbids their being saved for the same reason, for it is written, " he that believeth not shall be damned." (x)

2. The advocates of infant baptism suppose, that those who are acknowledged by Christ as the proper subjects of his kingdom, are entitled to baptism as the rite of initiation, and the seal of the covenant.

Three of the evangelists have informed us of persons who "brought little children unto Christ that he should put his hands on them and pray: and the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said suffer little children, and forbid them not to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven. And he laid his hands on them and departed thence." (y) On this passage it is presumed the following observations may, with propriety, be made.

(1.) The parents of these children were evidently believers in Christ as the Messiah; for they brought their children that they might receive his blessing: that, according to the form of consecrating children unto God in those days, (z) "he might put his hands on them and pray."

(2.) The disciples rebuked those who brought them, and for so doing were reproved by Christ.

(3.) That parents are at least permitted, but we think, commanded, to bring their children, and the apostles to suffer them to be brought, unto Christ.

(4.) The reasons which he assigned for this was, that they are the proper subjects of his kingdom; — "of such is the kingdom of heaven."

(5.) That our Lord considered it his duty to comply with the wishes of the parents of these children; and having assigned this as his reason. "He took them up in his arms, put his hands on them, and blessed them."

Where then, the apostles had Christ's command, his example, and his reasons, for dedicating children unto God; and shall we suppose that these would have no influence on their conduct in future life? God forbid! They would, no doubt ever afterwards, consider such as being proper subjects for dedication to God, and for admission into his church. We have already seen, I trust, that the only initiatory ceremony is baptism; and I beg leave to suggest, sir, that, in my humble opinion, the transition from these proceedings of our Saviour, to infant baptism on the part of his apostles, after they received their commission, was necessary, and unavoidable.

I have exceeded the limits, which I had prescribed to myself on this passage; under the influence of a conviction of its importance in this case. For if infants have that interest in the merciful interposition of the Saviour in behalf of mankind, which constitutes them the proper subjects of "the kingdom of heaven," it is certainly the duty of every minister of the Gospel to silence every one who would forbid their being baptised, in the memorable language of his

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(x) See Mark 16. 16; Macknight on Matt. 28. 19, and Wesley's works, vol. 13. p. 400. (y) Matt. 19. 13, 15. (z) See Dr. A. Clarke's Comment on Matt. 19. 13. and Gen. 48. 14-16.

I beg leave, sir, to suggest, that I cannot look upon this declaration as representing "infants," as St. Luke terms these children, as merely types or figures of those who should "receive the kingdom of heaven," as in v. 8; and also in Luke 18. 16, which is nothing more than our Lord's improvement of this circumstance for the benefit of his disciples. This implying no real excellency, could not have furnished Christ, who always spoke of his kingdom as a spiritual one, with a conclusive answer to the objection of his disciples: nor could his looking upon them, and blessing them, in this point of view, have answered the design of those who brought them for his blessing. He always taught that his kingdom was spiritual in its nature: these, he declares, were the subjects of that kingdom; therefore they must be "spiritual," as are all the subjects of this kingdom. Gal. 6. 1. *that is, in a state of justification.*

**Barbour.**—“*Let the little children come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.*” If they are entitled to the blessings of the covenant, they have as much right to the seal of the covenant, and the ordinance of initiation, as the Jewish infants had to circumcision, and the privilege of being “presented unto the Lord.” (g) and this, I think, is further evident, from a remarkable passage in the sixty fifth chap. of the prophecy by the Prophet Isaiah, in which he foretells the calling of the Gentiles into the Gospel Church. “*For ye, says he, are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring will I be with them.*” (h)

3. From what has been advanced it is only reasonable to inquire, whether the apostles of our Lord looked upon the children of believers as in any sense, different from those of the heathen.

When St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians on the subject of the lawfulness of a christian and a heathen continuing to live with each other, as husband and wife, one of the parties having been converted after their union, he expressed himself as follows. “*For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.*” (i)

I beg leave to suggest, sir, that I think it sufficiently evident, on the face of this passage, that the difficulty which the apostle solved, had originated in the state of the children, provided one party continued a heathen. The practices of the heathen, it is well known, were by various ceremonies to dedicate their children to idols before they were born. (j) Under these circumstances, no conscientious christian could live with a heathen, as they made it a point of conscience to dedicate their children unto the Holy Trinity—the true God, by baptism. But if the party which continued in heathenism, would (no doubt on the conditions prescribed by the christian party,) continue to live with the other, St. Paul advised it, as by these conditions, they were both agreeable that their offspring should be christian, separated from the heathen, dedicated to the true God, and consequently holy, in the sense in which I apprehend, the word is here used, as opposed to unclean. So far the heathen party was “sanctified,” or separated for the bringing forth a holy seed, by the christian party, he having prescribed the terms to which the other submitted. The apostle’s inference is, “*Else were your children unclean, but now are they holy, and therefore, the obstacle being removed, I advise the continuance of the union.*”

This, sir, I suppose to be the true signification of this confessedly difficult passage for the following reasons. First the apostle requires the continuance of the heathen party, certainly to some conditions prescribed by the other, in order to the continuance of the union. Secondly, this being obtained, he advises its continuance; under a conviction, that the unbelieving was sanctified by the believing partner, which cannot mean christian sanctification for the following reasons. No christian ever either pretended to possess, or did in reality possess, such a power; nor did the apostle suppose that they did; for he considered it doubtful whether the believer would be the means of saving the unbeliever. (k) Thirdly, he makes the holiness of the children consequent on the sanctification of the unbelieving party: for he says, “*Else were they unclean*”—And fourthly, consistent with this, he advises; “*If the unbelieving depart, let him depart, a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace.*” (l)

If this be the signification of this passage, it is sufficiently evident, that the difference between the children of the heathen, and those of the christian consisted in the former being dedicated to idols, and the latter to the Holy Trinity—the living and true God. In this exposition, I am not aware, that there is any thing assumed, but what, I trust, will be proved before the conclusion of this letter, viz: that this, according to the usages of the primitive christian church, was performed by baptism, which is, indisputably, the only ceremony, professedly a dedicatory nature, acknowledged among christians.

If this be not the meaning of this passage, I hope it will appear, that it is still more favourable to our cause: for in the above comment, I have taken the word “*Holy*” in its lowest sense, i. e. for one separated from the heathen, and “*pre-*

(g) Compare Lev. 12 ch. with Luke, 2. 24. (h) ver. 22. (i) 1 Cor. 7. 14.—

(j) See Dr. A. Clarke’s Comment on this passage. (k) v. 16. (l) v. 16.

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seated to the Lord." If it be to be taken in a real sense, it supports the doctrine 'already advanced, and makes St. Paul to affirm, that the children of the Corinthians were really "Holy;" and, of course, had a right to the ceremony of initiation into the christian church, which is called a "holy priesthood," and to the seal of the christian covenant. For, "could any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which had received the Holy Ghost as well as the apostle?"

4. This view of the subject very naturally leads us to inquire, whether the apostles considered the children of believers as members of the christian church.

I presume, Sir, that an impartial consideration of the language of St. Paul to the children in the churches of Ephesus and Colosae, cannot possibly leave a doubt on our minds on this subject (m). He evidently considered them members of these churches, instructed them as such, and proposed those motives to compliance which he could not expect would be effectual with any but those who paid a deference to his authority, and the approbation of God.

(1) He considered them members of these churches. In addition to the fact, that these epistles were addressed to the churches, and to be read in the assemblies of the christians, this must appear by the consideration, that they are mentioned among all the other classes, of every age and condition, of which these churches were composed. "There is no shade of difference indicated. They come to as complete compars with the classes which precede and follow. Included thus in the church, without the slightest note of distinction, what can be more evident, than that they made a part of the church in the mind of the founder?"

"Once more. Let the address of St. Paul to the Ephesian children be especially noted. Children, says he, obey your parents in the Lord. How could they obey their parents in the Lord, if they themselves were not in the Lord?—In every instance, this expression marks incorporation into the christian body. For example; when St. Paul distinguishes those of the family of Narcissus, who were christians, his language is: "who are in the Lord." In like manner, Onesimus, the concited servant of Philemon, was, in consequence of his conversion, to be doubly dear to his master, "in the flesh, and in the Lord;" "in the flesh," from having been formerly domesticated with Philemon; "in the Lord," as being now his fellow christian.(n)

"Respecting the age of the persons designated (Ephes. 6.1) by the term *children*, there can be no question; as a subsequent verse, (verse 4) distinctly states them to be such as were subjects of discipline and mental instruction."(o)

(2) He instructed them as members of those churches. He instructed them by the same means, incorporating his instructions to these children, in the body of the Epistles which he addressed to those particular churches. He applied to them the commands of that God, to whom as the offspring of christians, they had been dedicated, and whose commandments they were, no doubt, daily taught to reverence. "Children obey your parents in the Lord," says he, "for this is right."—"Honour thy father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise."(p)

(3) He proposed those motives to compliance, which he could not reasonably expect would be effectual with any, but those who paid a deference to his authority, and the approbation of God. In the passages above quoted, St. Paul takes it for granted, that they were not heathens; but believed, as they had been taught, in the true God, and Jesus Christ whom he had sent. This alone could give energy to the motives which he urges,—"This is well pleasing unto the Lord."—"Which is the first commandment with promise." He evidently rests the effects of his instructions on these motives, in connexion with his own influence and authority; hence he does not reason the case with them, to prove that what he commanded was just and equitable, but, as became one who was instructing little children, simply asserts—"this is right." From these considerations, I hope it appears evident, that the apostle Paul considered the children of the Ephesians, and the Colossians, as members of the mystical body of Christ—"in the Lord," and consequently they were included among those who

(m) See Eph. 6. 1, &c; Col. 3. 20. (n) See Rom. 16. 11, & Phil. verse 16.—  
(o) Dr. A. Clarke's Comment on Mark 16. (p) Eph. 6. 1, 2.

had been—"buried with him in baptism;" and who had—"one Lord, one faith, one baptism."(q)

5. In connexion with the passages which we have just had under consideration, parents are exhorted to "bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

I would beg leave, Sir, to ask, whether a person who, from a sense of duty to God, a consciousness of the worth of an immortal soul, and but an imperfect idea of the dangers to which a child is exposed, while under his care, would engage in this great work without first dedicating his charge to God, and thereby placing it "under his protection and blessing?" A rational being would suppose, that the common sense of a heathen, but especially the piety of a Christian, would make him shudder at the thought. Surely every man who feels as a Christian, for his offspring, will imitate the conduct of Joseph and Mary, who brought the Holy child Jesus into the temple, and "presented him to the Lord;"(r) or of those parents whose conduct we have already admired, who brought "infants unto Christ that he would touch them"—or "put his hands on them and pray."(s) And why should not our children be "presented unto the Lord" in baptism? Does it belong to that dispensation, compared with which, those that have preceded it, have "No glory" remaining "by reason of the glory that excelleth," to abridge our privileges, and deprive the Christian of the opportunity of "presenting his children unto the Lord;" by presenting them for admission into his church, and thereby laying each party under an obligation to fulfil his duty? Surely not. But I beg leave humbly, yet confidently, to shantain; that if we deprive our children of infant baptism, we deprive ourselves of this privilege, (for we have no other ordinance in which it can be performed,) and that, I presume, in direct opposition to the evident design of the Saviour of men, and the peculiar friend of "infants," who has committed baptism the initiatory ceremony into his church, and commanded his ministers "to suffer little children to be brought by their parents unto Him, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." A privilege this, Sir, of which, I thank my God, I believe neither you nor I would be deprived, for the world.

6. We suppose infant, to have an advantage over, adult baptism; because in addition to other motives, it more effectually presses filial affection and reverence into the service of religion, and by this means unites one of the most powerful principles in nature, to the most powerful principle in religion;—love and reverence for our parents, to love and reverence to the Supreme Being; and that at a time of life, when the heart is most susceptible of the finer feelings of our nature, and least overclouded and banished by sin.

When a child has been taught to reverence and obey its parents, and trained up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; and of course frequently reminded of its baptismal obligations, it is reasonable to suppose, that it will feel the force of these obligations in a greater degree, owing to its dedication by their instruction, their tears, and their prayers. It is exceedingly probable, that this was one of the designs of circumcision under the law. It was not, as has been frequently asserted, merely initiatory to temporal privileges, and carnal ordinances, but ~~the~~ baptism, "A seal of the righteousness of faith;"(t) and why "a seal of the righteousness of faith" should be set on an infant of eight days old, I am at a loss to conceive; unless, as in the case of baptism, it was to give the parent an opportunity of offering the child to God, by sealing it with the seal of the covenant; to give him a kind of a religious, in addition to his natural, authority over it; and to lay the parent under the necessity of inducting the child in the nature of the covenant, and the child under the obligation of obedience, in its spiritual, as well as its temporal concerns. Certain it is; that it only profited, in proportion as it produced these effects. "For he was not a Jew who was one outwardly; neither was that circumcision which was outward in the flesh: but he was a Jew who was one inwardly; and circumcision was that of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men but of God." Of this the Jews were apprised by Moses in a most pathetic appeal to their filial affection, in which he informs them, that it was owing to the love which the Lord had to their "fathers," that he had "chosen their seed

(q)Eph. 4. 5. Colos. 2. 12. (r)See Luke 2. 22. (s)Matt. 19. 14. Luke 18. 15. (t)Rom. 4. 11.

after them, above all people, as it was that day." "Circumcise therefore," says he "the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-necked." (t)

But again. It furnishes the parent with additional arguments, to prompt the child to a life of obedience to God. He may inform it, when it comes to years, that in consequence of the authority vested in him by the Almighty, and in conformity with what he considered to be his duty, he had by baptism dedicated it to God, and procured it initiation into the church of Christ in infancy, and "beseech" it, by all that is dear to it,—by paternal authority and affection, and "by the mercies of God, to present its body a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is its reasonable service." Nor will any man who is the friend of either parents or children, for a moment, doubt, whether a parent possesses this authority; as it is indisputably established by both the Old and New Testaments. I trust it has already appeared, that the duty enjoined in the following words of Moses, is not to be confined to the Mosaic dispensation.—"Ye stand this day all of you before the Lord your God;—your little ones, young wives, and thy stranger that is in the camp;—that thou shouldest enter into covenant with the Lord thy God,—that he may establish thee to day for a people unto himself, and that he may be unto thee a God." (u)

If, therefore, it be true, sir, that principles, and arguments, and motives, are of use in Religion, as incentives to repentance, faith, and holiness; I presume, we may venture to affirm, that the designs of Christian baptism, are more likely to be answered by infant than by adult baptism, seeing that its obligations may be enforced in infancy; are binding as soon as the child arrives at years of maturity; are sanctioned by both divine and paternal authority and affection; and are no less binding on every pious man who does not doubt its validity, than if baptism had been administered to him by his own desire when he first began to "confess Christ before men."

7. I flatter myself, Sir, that, from what has been said it has appeared, that the arguments from scripture are greatly in favour of Infant Baptism. This will lead us to anticipate a favorable result from an examination of ancient ecclesiastical history.

In consulting the fathers on matters of fact, we, of course, avoid all the objections which have been urged against consulting them on points of doctrine; as we have only to give them credit for that veracity which we should not deny to any of our historians unless he was known to violate the truth, or to give us relations which are impossible and absurd. This premised; I beg leave to transcribe, from Mr. Wesley's work, the best epitome of ecclesiastical history on this subject, (together with the author's remarks) which I remember to have seen. "(1.) Justin Martyr, who wrote about forty years after the apostles, in his dialogue with Trypho the Jew, page 59, plainly speaks of baptism, as being to Christians in the stead of circumcision. And in his apology for the Christians, near the beginning, (v) he says, Several persons among us of sixty and seventy years old, of both sexes, were baptised, (or made disciples,) to Christ in or from their childhood." Please to observe, that Justin's word—"enanthegeth" were baptised, or made disciples, is the very same word that had been used by St. Matthew, 28. 19, in expressing the Saviour's command; mathegete, disciple all nations. And it was done to these persons, Justin says, in or from their childhood. And he wrote that apology within forty years of the death of the apostles; and seventy years reckoned back from that time, do reach into the midst of the apostles' time.

"2. Irenaeus, born about the time of St. John's death, (and "well acquainted with Polycarp who was John's disciple,") speaking of Christ, says, "Not disdain-  
ing, nor going in a way above human nature, nor breaking in his own person the law which he had set for mankind: but sanctifying every several age by the likeness it had to him. For he came to save all persons by himself: all, I mean, who by him are regenerated unto God; infants, and little ones, and children, and youths, and elderly persons. Therefore he went through the several ages: for infants, being made an infant, sanctifying infants, &c.

"This testimony, which reckons infants among those that are regenerated, is plain and full. Dr. Wall has largely shewn, that the word regenerating does,

(t) See Deut. 10: 18, 16; Rom. 2. 28—29, and ch. 4. 11. (u) Dent. 29. 10—13.

(v) See Reeve's Apologies, vol. 1. p. 39, where the author, in a note on this passage, proves that it has a reference to infant baptism.

particularly in the writings of Irenaeus, and the usual phrase of those times, signify baptising; he mentions some places which expressly declare, that Christ was regenerated by John; meaning that he was baptised by him.

"Near the time that Irenaeus wrote" the treatise, from which the above extract is made, "Clemens Alexandrinus wrote his Pedagog, wherein he expressly says, "the word regeneration is the name of baptism."

"Please to take notice how near this man was to the Apostles' time. Irenaeus himself says, that the revelation made to St. John in Patmos, was but a little before his time, and that revelation was five or six years before St. John's death. In an age so high the apostles, and in a place where one of them so lately lived, the christians could not be ignorant, what had been done in their time, in a matter so public, as the baptizing, or not baptizing, of infants.

"3. Origen is not only express for the baptizing of infants, but gives his reasons for it." One passage out of many shall suffice. "For this also it was, that the church had, from the apostles an order to give baptism to infants. For they to whom the divine mysteries were committed, knew that there is in all persons the natural pollution of sin, which must be done away by water and the spirit."

"The reader is desired to observe, that Origen not only says, that it was the custom of the church to baptize infants, but he expressly affirms, "that the church received an order from the apostles to give baptism even to infants."

"4. There is one circumstance, that makes Origen a more competent witness to give evidence, whether the baptizing of infants had been, in his time out of mind or not, than most other authors that we have left to us of that age: because he was himself of a family that had been christians for a long time. The other witnesses that I have mentioned, except Irenaeus, must have been themselves baptized in adult age; because they were of Heathen parents. But Origen's father was a martyr for Christ in the persecution under Severus, the year after the apostles, 102. And Eusebius assures us, that his forefathers had been christians for several generations.

"Now since Origen was born in the eighty fifth year after the apostles, (for he was seventeen years old when his father suffered martyrdom,) his grandfather, or at least his great grandfather, must have lived in the apostles' time. And as he could not be ignorant whether he was himself baptized in infancy, so he had no farther than his own family to go, to inquire what was practised in the time of the apostles.

"Besides that, he was a very learned man, and could not be ignorant of the use of the churches; and in most of which he had travelled: for as he was born and bred at Alexandria, so it appears out of Eusebius's history, that he had lived in Greece, and at Rome, and in Cappadocia, and Arabia, and spent the main part of his time in Syria and Palestine.

"5. What I apprehend very much strengthens the truth of infant baptism, that it is of divine original, is this, "About one hundred and fifty years after the death of St. John the Apostle, there was an assembly of sixty six bishops, who spoke of infant baptism as a known, established, and uncontested practice." One Fidus questioned whether infants were to be baptized, as soon as between two and three days after their birth; and whether it would not be better to defer their baptism till they were eight days old, as was observed in circumcision; which scruples he proposed to this assembly, and in which he desired their resolution, which they sent in a letter to him."

Every member of the assembly was, however, of a contrary opinion; and while they acknowledged that baptism was "the spiritual circumcision," yet they say it "ought not to be restrained by the circumcision that is according to the flesh," and that it was "not for them to hinder any person from baptism and the grace of God, who is merciful, and benign, and affectionate to all, which rule," they proceed, as it "holds good for all, so we think it is more especially to be observed in reference to infants newly born."

"From this part of history it appears that, both the persons who moved the doubt, and all the persons who resolved it, unanimously agreed in this, that infants were to be baptised, and that it was the settled custom of the church to baptise them. If the assembly had been against infant baptism, they would have answered; "It is not necessary to baptise children on the eighth day after their birth, that they ought not to be baptised at all, till they are of age to judge and act for themselves." But none of these persons were in

this sentiment. They all looked upon it as a thing uncontested, that infants were to be baptized.

" If we look back from this time to the space that had passed from the apostles' time, which was but one hundred and fifty years, we must conclude, that it was easy then to know the practice of the christians in the apostles' days, for some of those sixty six bishops may be thought to be at this time sixty or seventy years old themselves, which reaches almost to half the space: and at that time, when they were infants, there must have been several alive that were born within the apostles' age. And such could not be ignorant whether infants were baptized in that age, when they themselves were some of those infants. And as there was no dispute or difference of opinion, (as there must have been among so many, if any innovation had been made: for it is expressly said, there was not one of Fidus's mind,) that infant baptism must be delayed, till the eighth day; much less were there any of opinion, that it was not to be administered at all." (w)

" From the year 400 to 1150, no society of men, in all that period of 750 years, ever pretended to say it was unlawful to baptize infants: and still nearer the time of our Saviour, there appears to have been scarcely any one who advised the delay of infant baptism. The Catholic church every where declares, says Chrysostom in the fifth century, that infants are to be baptized; and Augustinus affirmed, that he never heard or read of any christian, catholic or sectarian, but who always held that infants were to be baptized." (x)

8. These confirmations of the point under consideration, from the earliest Ecclesiastical historians, will appear the more striking by being contrasted with the history of the origin of the Anabaptists, or those who refuse baptism to infants, and maintain, " That those who have been baptized in their infancy ought to be baptized anew."

" As for the first 400 years, there appears only one man, Testullian (who flourished in the year 198, that advised the delay of infant baptism,) (" except where their lives were in danger,") and one Gregory, who flourished in the year 370, who " advised to defer it till three years old," and " did perhaps practice such delay in the case of his own children, but no society of men so thinking or so practising; so in the next seven hundred years, there is not so much as one man to be found, that either spoke for or practised such delay. But all the contrary. And when one sect of the Waldenses declared against the baptizing of infants, as being incapable of salvation, the main body of that people rejected their opinion: and those of them that held that opinion, quickly dwindled away, and disappeared; there being no more heard of holding that tenet, till the rising of the German antiyado-baptists in the year 1523."

The contrast here, Sir, is sufficiently striking. Whosoever an opponent of infant baptism made his appearance in the primitive church, he had always to oppose the tide of custom as established from the earliest periods; and in the annals of the ancient churches of every quarter, appears as singular as those monsters which are occasionally met with in both the world of nature, and that of intellect; and whose singularities of formation and procedure, we certainly more properly pity and deplore, than envy and imitate. To my mind, it appears exceedingly probable, that even so late as the sixteenth century, they would not have been able to form a party sufficiently strong to attract the attention of either the church or the world, had not this sentiment been associated with a contempt for all laws, both human and divine; which gave its propagators an infamous popularity, and drew thousands to their standard who are " known by their fruits," to have possessed no sincere regard either for christianity or its ceremonies. (y)

(w) "Thoughts on infant baptism, extracted from a late writer," by Mr. Wesley's work, vol. 12. p. 419 - 424. See also Cave's " Primitive christianity," p. 202. Edition 1608. (x)Martindale's Bib. Dic. Art. " Baptism." (y)See history of Socinianism from Monsieur L'Amy, by W. Webster, M.A. p. 78, &c. Ed. 1726: and Gregory's christian ob. vol. 2. p. 429, &c. Ed. 1795. This is only stated as a matter of fact supposed to be established by the history of the sixteenth century, without any design to reflect on any who hold the same opinion, but, contrary to their predecessors, see " Leading quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty."

9. As the observance of infant baptism among christians necessarily supersedes adult baptism, unless the ordinance be repeated, it will not be foreign to my design to inquire whether the ancients were consistent with themselves, by forbidding those who had been baptized in infancy, to be rebaptized when they arrived at years of accountability and discretion.

I beg leave, sir, to premise, that I apprehend the very nature of baptism, it being an initiatory ceremony, makes its repetition improper: and if it be an initiatory ceremony appointed by the Almighty, as, I trust, we may presume it is, its repetition is profane, as it must be profane to repeat what he has ordained should only be once administered. I leave it for you, sir, and my readers in general, to determine, how far St. Paul has established this in that well known passage to the Ephesians,—“ One Lord, one faith, one baptism.” (a) You need not be informed, that, in the preceding context, he presses upon them the necessity of “ Endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace;” (a) and the arguments by which he enforces this exhortation are,—“ There is one body, and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism,” &c. The exhortation then is to union. The arguments by which it is enforced are; they were different members composing “one body;”—that body was inspired by “one,” and the same, “spirit;”—they were animated by “one hope,” had all submitted to “one Lord;”—possessed “one faith;” and had been initiated into that faith, and all the other blessings of the gospel, by “one baptism.” To introduce a plurality, in any sense, destroys the force of the apostle’s reasoning, and defeats his purpose; as they are suspended on the ideality, or sameness, of the christian’s “Lord,” his “faith,” and his “baptism,” &c. As then they were only to have one purpose or design, because among other things, they had “one baptism;” and, as I hope it has appeared, it was lawful for that it should be administered in infancy, I beg leave humbly to suggest, that I think this passage forbids the repetition of the ceremony, where it has once been administered.

We meet with a similar passage in the epistle to the Hebrews, where the apostle exhorts them, “ Leaving the” (“first”) “principles of the doctrine of Christ, to go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith towards God, of the doctrine of baptism,” &c. (b)—When we consider these words as addressed to those who were so “unskillful,” that when they ought to have been men and teachers, they were only children, and needed to be taught, and that for the purpose of enforcing progress, (c) they certainly very forcibly forbid the repetition of any of the “first principles of the doctrine of Christ,” among which “the doctrine of baptism” is included; and I presume, that, in order to prove that these passages are not directly in point, it must be proved; that none of those who are addressed, had not been baptized in infancy. This is the more needful, as, I trust, it has been proved, from the epistle to the Ephesians, that children were considered members of that church; and also that the apostle, in the epistle to the Hebrews, proves by an interchange of conditions and promises, the sameness of what have been too frequently considered as separate covenants, instead of different dispensations of the same covenant, and hereby confirms the arguments in favour of infant baptism under the gospel, having succeeded to infant circumcision under the Patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations. This is particularly the doctrine of the eleventh chapter, in which he proves, that in all ages, the terms of acceptance had been invariably the same, inasmuch as “Without faith it was always ‘impossible to please God,’ and that ‘an heavenly country,’ was invariably the reward of this faith (d).

I will conclude this letter, sir, which, from the abundance of matter which has crowded upon me, has been protracted greatly beyond what I intended, by a few testimonies from ancient historians, in conformity with the prefatory remarks made on the preceding passages.

Dr. Hammond, when commenting on our Lord’s words—“ He that is washed,

(a) Chap. 4, verse 5. (a) verse 3. (b) Chap. 6, 1, 2. Baptisms being here in the plural, Whitby paraphrases the passage thus,—“ The doctrine of baptizing, (that of water and of the spirit, by which they that repent and believe, are initiated into the church of Christ.”) See Mat. 3, 12, and John 3, 5. Others are of opinion that the baptism of repentance by John, and afterwards in the name of Jesus, are intended. See Acts 19, 2-6; and Coke, and Mocknight on this passage. (c) See verses 12-14. (d) See particularly verses 15, 16.

needeth not, save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit,"(e) observes—" For that ceremony of initiation was never repeated, say the Jewish writers." The force of this testimony in the present case, depends, of course, on christian baptism being a continuation of that of the Jews, a subject on which I believe you are fully satisfied.

The first mention which is made, in christian ecclesiastical history, of rebaptising any who had been baptised in the name of the Holy Trinity, is in the controversy which originated between Cyprian Bishop of Carthage, and Stephen Bishop of Rome, in the year 256, or according to Bishop Beveridge, in 258. The former maintained that there was no true baptism out of the church, and, of course, that all who had been baptized by heretics, "ought to be rebaptized." The latter "as stiffly maintained it to be both against the doctrine and the practice of the church.—Cyprian endeavouring to strengthen his cause, not only by arguments from Scripture, but by calling a council at Carthage of 87 African Bishops, who all concurred for his opinion. How truly Cyprian maintained this, I am not concerned to inquire; only I take notice of two things which he and his followers pleaded by way of abatement of the rigour of their opinions. First, that hereby they did not assert rebaptism to be lawful, this they expressly deny to receive any patronage from their practice; for they looked upon that baptism that had been conferred by heretics as null and invalid, (seeing that heretics being out of the church could not give what they had not) and therefore when any returned to the union of the church, they could not properly be said to be rebaptized, seeing they did but receive what (lawfully) they had not before. Secondly, that they did not promiscuously baptize all that came over from heretical churches, for where any had been lawfully baptized by orthodox ministers before their going over to them, these they received at their return without any other ceremony than imposition of hands."(f)

Consistent with this is the 39th of the apostolical canons, attributed to Cyprian; which decrees—" If a bishop or priest do again baptize one who has really received baptism before, or if he do not baptize one that has been polluted by wicked men, (heretics) let him be deposed as one that derides the Cross and Death of Christ, and makes no distinction betwixt priests and false pretenders."(g)

The following, according to Reeves in his "Apologies," was in substance the "determination" of three of the primitive councils on this subject, viz. that of "Aries, some years before that of Nice;"—"The first Nicene council;"—"And lastly that of Carthage, under Gratus Bishop of that city, in the year 348. For the first "thing there proposed, was, whether that man ought to be rebaptized, who at his baptism made profession of believing the Trinity? To which the bishops answered, God forbid: We declare, that this rebaptism is unlawful, contrary to the orthodox faith, and the ecclesiastical discipline."(h)

From these testimonies, Sir, I hope it will appear, that it never was the custom of the primitive church to rebaptize those who had been admitted to that ordinance in infancy. You are aware, that Cyprian and his adherents, and the Donatists (who pleaded his authority for their proceedings,) who may be called the Anabaptists of the primitive church, both baptised infants. Hence in the African code, it is decreed,—"That they only of the Donatists who were baptized in their infancy by them, be not incapable of being promoted to the ministry of the altar when converted."(i) And we have already seen that Cyprian, at the head of the 86 bishops who decided in the case of infants being baptized before they were eight days old, decreed, that baptism might be administered as soon as they were born. "St. Augustin assures us, where speaking of his synodical determination, that in this Cyprian did not make a new decree, but kept the faith of the church most firm and sure."(j)

Could I flatter myself, Sir, that all my readers would exercise an equal degree

(e) John 13. 10, on which see Dr. Dwight's excellent remarks, System of Theol. vol. 6. p. 358—360. London, 1819. (f) Cave's Prim. Chris. p. 199.—See also Reeve's Apol. v. 2. p. 254—255. 259—262. (g) " Clergyman's Vade Mecum," vol. 2. p. 24. 25. 3d ed. of "the Apostolical Constitutions," Dr. Doddridge observes, "which are allowed to be an ancient though "not divine book."—(h) Reeves' Apol. vol. 2. p. 261, 262. (i) Cler. Vade Mecum, vol. 2. p. 287.—(j) Cave's Prim. Chris. p. 202, 203.

of candour and patience with yourself, my hopes of success would be much more sanguine than, I confess, they are. I should then anticipate the prevalence of as much satisfaction in their minds, on the subject of the legitimacy of infant baptism, as now prevails in my own; and I should also be free from all anxiety as to the feelings which may be excited by the length, and, perhaps, I ought to add, the tediousness, of my present communication. Sincerely praying, that however various our ideas may be, either as to the legality of infant baptism, or the strength of the arguments by which it is supported, we may all "Receive the kingdom of heaven like little children."

I am,

Revd. and very dear Sir,

Your's most respectfully,  
and affectionately,

GEORGE JACKSON.

Sackville, Westmoreland, N. B.  
May 15th, 1822.

## Letter III.

Reverend and very dear Sir,

AS I believe it has appeared from the preceding Letter, that baptism is a ceremonial observance, I should be justly convicted of leaving the subject but very partially discussed, were I entirely to omit any remarks on the mode of administration. I shall therefore proceed.

IV. To give a few reasons for our differing from those who maintain that immersion is the only legal mode of administering this ordinance, and for believing, that sprinkling and pouring, are also legitimate.

1. As far as I have been able to gain information on this subject, the arguments drawn from the scriptures in favour of immersion, are chiefly founded on verbal criticism.

Arguments of this nature, Sir, are, to my humble opinion, always of the most uncertain kind; and here the uncertainty is considerably increased, as it has been shown, that it is at least possible, that a considerable proportion of the fabric may be built on a wrong translation of some of the smallest, and most equivocal, particles in the Greek language. I do not profess to be an authority on any, and especially on this, part of our subject; and shall therefore avail myself of the labours of those who are confessedly such, and produce a few quotations from their writings.

"It has been observed that John baptized in Jordan: to this it is replied, to infer always a plunging of the whole body in water from his word, would, in many instances, be false and absurd: the same Greek preposition *en* is used when it is said they should be baptized with fire; which few will assert that they should be plunged into it. The apostle, speaking of Christ, says, *he came not (en) by water only, but (en) by water and blood.* There the same word *en* is translated *by*, and with justice and propriety, for we know of no good sense in which we could say he came *in* water. It has been remarked, that *en* is more than a hundred times, in the New Testament, rendered "*of*"; and in a hundred and fifty others it is translated *with*. If it be rendered so here, "John baptized *at* Jordan," or with the water of Jordan, there is no proof from thence "that he plunged his disciples" in it." (k)

"It is said of our Saviour, that after he was baptized, he went up straightway out of the water, *anabe apo ten udatos*, he ascended from the water: the word *anabainein* signifying *to go, or come up; to ascend; in whatever manner.* This passage appears to be descriptive, solely of Christ's ascending the banks of Jordan, after he had received baptism. That this is not the meaning of the phrase, cannot be shown; nor rendered probable. The preposition, *apo*, is erroneously rendered *out of* in our translation. Its proper meaning, as every Greek scholar known, is *from*; and *out of*, only by accident: as in Matthew 7, 4. "Let me pull out the mote *out of* thine eye." Even here, it would be much better rendered, "Let me take the mote *from* thine eye." If Matthew intended to express Christ's rising *out of* the water, he has certainly used phraseology of a very peculiar nature.

"Another passage often triumphantly alleged for the same purpose, is Acts 8.

\*The Greek words, as in the preceding letters, must be necessarily written in the corresponding English characters, as Greek types cannot, in this country, be procured.

(k) Buck's Theol. Dic. Art. "Baptism." See also Dwight's Sys. Theol. v. 5 p. 328.

ss. 29. <sup>4</sup> And they went down both into the water, both Philip and the Eunuch ; and he baptized him ; and when they were come up out of the water, the spirit of the Lord caught away Philip. To the translation here, no reasonable objection can be made. I will, therefore, not avail myself of what might, however, be justly alleged, to wit, that *εις* may, with equal propriety, signify *to*, and *εκ*, from ; and, of course, the passage would read, " went down" *in*, and " were come up" *from* the water. Still I object to the construction of my antagonists, for these reasons.

"First ; That we as naturally say, that they went into the water, of those who went in to the depth of the knees, or even of the ankles, as of those who had plunged themselves.

"Secondly ; The declarations, here made, are made concerning the Eunuch and Philip alike. Of both it is said, that they went down into the water ; if we render the word *εις*, into. Of both, also, it is said, that when they were come up out of the water ; if we render the word *εκ*, out of. Now let me see what will be the true import of the passage, according to this method of construing the words in question. And they went down, both, into the water, both Philip and the Eunuch : that is, they were both plunged. And he baptized him, that is, Philip plunged the Eunuch. And when they were come up out of the water, that is, when they had both been plunged the second time, and risen up from their immersion, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip. In other words, both were plunged twice ; and the Eunuch, the third time.

"It is, I presume, unnecessary to comment on this version of the text under consideration. The only remark which I shall make upon it is, that the adoption of such a sense for the two words, *ενεβαίνω* and *κατεβαίνω*, by some learned critics, in the face of this construction of the text, is not a little surprising.

"Thirdly, I conclude, as I think, with certainty, that these words have no reference to the immersion of either ; but are merely descriptive of the fact, that they went down to, or into, the water, in which, perhaps, they waded a little distance." (1)

The impropriety of laying so great a stress on prepositions which are capable of being translated in all cases with an equal, and in some cases, with a superior, degree of propriety, so as rather to overthrow than to support the doctrine of immersion, will probably appear from the following consideration. In no part of the scriptures is this mode of speech adopted, but where the relation has for its subject, some person who was convinced of its propriety in the open air ; and where it was, of course, necessary, that he, and the person performing the ceremony, should go to some adjacent water in order to its being administered.

As the baptism of John was not christian baptism, but that of "repentance," as is evident from his own confession, and from the apostle re-baptizing those who had received it, (m) the only case exactly in point, is the one just referred to, viz. that of Philip and the Eunuch. Here we are informed, that they went down into, or to the water. But it is sufficiently obvious, that owing to existing circumstances this was a case of necessity, and, of course, can be no rule, where a choice of means presents itself. Philip was sent to the Eunuch to disciple him, on the "way that goeth down from Jerusalem to Gaza, which is desert." In accomplishing his commission, he was successful, for by explaining the prophecy which the Eunuch was reading, he convinced him that "Jesus Christ is the Son of God," and that it was his duty to be baptised in his name. "And as they went on their way, they came to a certain water ; and the Eunuch said, see here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized. And Philip said, if thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest. — And he commanded the chariot to stand still : and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the Eunuch, and he baptized him." Here, then, it evidently appears, that though the baptism of the Eunuch was necessary to his being constituted a disciple, of which it is evident by this question, he had been apprised of its being administered in the open air, and their going down to the water, (for so it has appeared the word may be properly translated,) in order to perform the ceremony, was purely accidental, and consequent on their

(1) Dwight's Sys. of Theol. vol. 5. p p. 261, 262. (m) See Matt. 3. 11. and Acts 19. 1—6.

mention ; for, if they had not availed themselves of this water, Philip would, evidently, have been taken away from the Eunuch, without baptizing him at all ; but which, as this opportunity offered for baptizing him, Philip certainly would not think himself justified in doing.

Again ; were we to allow that they went down into the water, and that this phrase signifies, that the Eunuch was baptized by immersion, it would only prove that this was one of the forms used by the apostles, (but certainly not that it was the only one,) and especially as, I hope, it will appear from other passages, that there are, at least, as striking evidences in favour of some other mode of administration, as this is supposed to furnish in favour of immersion. And are we from these equivocal phrases to infer the doctrine of immersion ; and from the Eunuch's being baptized at, or even in, a river, a brook, or a pool, which for any thing that appears on the face of the history, did not reach up to their ankles, to make this mode of administration binding on the church in all ages ?

I now beg leave, Sir, to contrast this solitary case, with a number which are undeniably, at least of equal importance ; are recorded by the same historian ; and, if they were performed in the manner, in which this is supposed to have been performed, are certainly entitled to a relation equally specific in its details.

Why are we not informed, that Peter and his colleagues, on the day of Pentecost, took the three thousand to some place where there "was much water," and baptised them ? Is the first act of christian baptism, after the apostles were properly qualified for carrying their commission into effect, by the descent of the Holy Ghost, performed on the three thousand souls, of less importance than that of the solitary case of the Ethiopian Eunuch ; that no mention should be made of the mode of administration, of the place where it was performed ? Perhaps, Sir, you will not think it improbable, that the following were the causes of this difference in the proceedings of Philip and the apostles in baptising, and of the same historian in giving us his relations of their conduct, in the two cases. First ; There does not appear to have been as much water in the city of Jerusalem, nor even in its vicinity, as was occasioned by "sudden and heavy rains," as would have been required for the purpose. For the "city had but a moderate supply ; and, though the places adjacent were well watered, having the fountains

For the following reasons, Sir, I suppose it probable, that this was nothing more than some small running or standing water, of which neither Philip nor the Eunuch knew any thing until it attracted the attention of the latter. First ; had it been a river, its name would in all probability have been mentioned, and it would not have been called "A certain water." And the more particular our opponents believe the historian to have been in his phraseology, the more incumbent it is on them, either to believe, or refute this. Secondly ; the Eunuch expresses himself as though surprised at its appearance ; which he would scarcely have been at the appearance of a river which he had passed, in his way to Jerusalem. The words he uses are not, "see here is water." Those words in italics are supplied by our translators. His words, when literally translated, are, See, Behold, or Lo ! water ; and lead us to suppose, that just at this time, Philip was instructing him in the nature and necessity of christian baptism ; and, surprised with the seasonable and unexpected appearance of water, he exclaims.—"Behold, water ! what doth hinder me to be baptised?" Thirdly ; this is not a country in which rivers abound. In scripture geography, and in all the maps of this country which have come under my observation, and they are the most correct of any published, I can only find one in the whole distance between Jerusalem and Gaza. It is called Sorek ; and it is probable, that it is but an inconsiderable stream. The valley through which this river, or "Brook," passes, was the residence of Deilah, (Judges 16. 4.) which by our translators, in the Margin, is said to be by the "Brook." Unless therefore they happened to be just in this particular place at the time, the probability is, that there would not, in the whole journey, be an opportunity for immersing the Eunuch, and perhaps not even there, unless it happened to be in one of their rainy seasons.

This could not, in the ordinary course of things, be the case at the feast of Pentecost, as the rains in Palestine are pernicious ; "the former rains" falling

“Hos and Hizion, and also the brook Kidron, at the foot of the walls,” yet this brook, which “receives all the rivulets about Jerusalem, is generally but small, and sometimes dry.” (a) Those then who infer from John’s going down to Jordan because there was much water, or “many waters,” there, as some translate it, that he went for the opportunity it afforded him of dipping his disciples, and from this infer, that we ought to be dipped, are bound for the sake of consistency to suppose, that Peter and the other disciples, went at least out of the city, but I think out of the vicinity, of Jerusalem, for the same reason, and especially so dispatch is so evident on the face of the history, for they baptised 3000 on “the same day,” which was, undoubtedly the manner in which they were added to the church. If they believe this, they ought, in order to keep themselves in consistency, to inform us, where they believe they baptised; to prove that they had time to remove with all the disciples, and baptise them, in the course of one day; and then to account for the silence of the sacred historian, notwithstanding his having, in every other proceeding of the day, detailed the transaction with scrupulous exactness; and according to their opinion, been no significantly specific in his details, in a solitary instance certainly of much less importance to a history of the primitive christian church. Secondly; Those who were baptised on the day of pentecost, by the apostles, “certainly came to hear them without having prepared any proper dress, in which to be baptised: for they could not even know that they would baptise them. It will not therefore be instructed, that this promiscuous assembly were immersed naked, (if at all,) to have immersed them, with their clothes on, would have exposed them to certain disease and death.” And I must confess, that I cannot see, how to have immersed them in this state could have answered any of the purposes of that religion, the prominent feature of which, is purity in thought, word and deed, and its peculiar excellencies, that it checks iniquity in its very origin, and enforces it on its disciples as a duty, that they “abstain from all appearance of evil.” (o) There is something so extremely indecent in the very idea, that I assure you, Sir, it should never have been penned by me, but in imitation of my predecessors on this subject, to show the fallacy of the arguments by which it is intended to be proved, that immersion is essential to christian baptism, because as is supposed, it was invariably practised by the apostles.

“In a nation, whose manners are like ours, says an able writer on this subject there is, to say the least, a degree of impropriety in the practice which is very unhappy. It will be sufficient to say, that whatever impressions may be made by this practice in countries where bathing is a standing custom; here, they are of a very unfortunate nature, and such are directly opposed to every religious feeling. I speak from facts, and not opinions; and from facts, repeated through a century, and therefore operating, not by their novelty, but by their nature.” (p)

But thirdly; both the prophet Joel, and John the Baptist, in foretelling the descent of the Holy Ghost; and the apostle Peter, and St. Luke, in the Acts of the Apostles, furnish us with almost indisputable evidence, that the disciples on the day of Pentecost, did not consider baptism and immersion as inseparable. Joel says, “He shall pour out his spirit upon all flesh.” St. Peter quoting this prophecy, makes use of the same words, John the Baptist foretelling this glorious event, says—“He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire;” and St. Luke makes use of the same expression. (q) What, I would ask, is the legitimate inference from the indiscriminate use of the words pour and baptize by teachers who were all inspired by one spirit, but the pouring is baptism? Under these circumstances, I conclude, that, “It seems almost a thing of course

in Sept. and ‘the latter’ in March. As the Jewish month Nissan answered to a part of two of our’s—March and April, and the passover was held on the 14th day of this month, the latter rains would be falling about the time of the passover. From this to the feast of pentecost, they reckoned seven weeks, (Lev.23, 15, 16) which brings us just to the time of their wheat harvest; on account of which this feast was called also, “the day of the first fruits”; whereas the latter rains fell at the time the ears were filling, and “it was principally from them that they derived their hopes of a fruitful year.”

(a) See Crozier’s Script. Gal. Article Jerusalem and Kidron. (o) See Blatt, §. 28, and I. Theor. 5. 22. (p) Dwight’s Sys. Theol. v. 5. p. 369, 381. (q) Compare Joel 2. 28, Acts 2. 17 and 11, 5, Matt. 3. 11.

yet this is small, Jordan into it, and consisting of the city, specially 3000 were added slaves in that they of one thousand. sections. significantly variance so were to heard : for therefore (at all) them to know of and deed, sin, and once of that I on of my which it him, be- subject is very be made they are religious through nature. (p) ing the Acts of disciples parable, quoting this nature ; " it is the baptism baptism ? course

that the apostles, who had just received a spiritual baptism, by the effusion of the Holy Ghost, and announced it to their hearts, should follow the mode, in which this baptism was administered to them, in administering that baptism, which was symbolical of it, to their hearers." To object as some have done, that the Holy Ghost filled all the house where they were sitting, and that consequently the disciples were immersed, is to " do direct violence to the words of the Evangelist. St. Luke informs that the ~~water~~ filled the houses, beside, the metaphysical absurdity, and, as I think, indecency, of attributing place and extension, in this manner, to the Divine Spirit."

The other cases, which I would beg permission to contrast with that of the Eunuch, are those of Cornelius, Saul, and the Jailer, &c.

In the case of Cornelius it has been observed, that St. Peter's question—" Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized ? " implies certainly that the water was to be brought for the baptism of the new converts, and not that they were to go out to the water. This idea will be the more forcible, in proportion to the importance which we attach to Whitby's Comment on the former clause of the following verse,—" And he commanded them to be baptized." (r) " Whom did he command to do this ? The Gentiles ? It seemeth at first sight absurd that they who were not yet baptized should baptize others ; or was it the Jews that came with him ? they seem only to be Lay brethren who only were permitted to baptize in case of necessity ; it seemeth therefore reasonable to say that he commanded water to be brought for their baptism, and then performed himself the office."

There is nothing that I can observe, in the history of Saul's Baptism, to lead any one to suppose, that he ever left his lodging until after he was baptized, had taken food, and was strengthened. The order of the history leads us to the opposite idea. He appears to have been confined to his bed, when Ananias went to him, through sight, blindness, anxiety concerning his state, and fasting three days. For we are informed, that " He arose and was baptized. And when he had received meat he was strengthened." Then was Saul certain days with the disciples at Damascus." (s) According to the order of the relation, " He arose and was baptized,—received meat, and was strengthened ;" and " then" went out into the city, and " was certain days with the disciples."

Nor is there any thing in the circumstances of the baptism of the jailer and his house, to lead to an opposite conclusion, to that at which we suppose we properly arrive in the former cases. The whole transaction took place at midnight, certainly not a very proper time for a whole family to repair to a water sufficiently deep for their immersion. The truth of the case appears to be, that the apostles were never outside the prison walls, from the time of their commitment, to the time they were fetched out by the magistrates. The jailer had no right to let them go out without their command, and it appears he was faithful to his charge : for though he took them into his house, they were evidently considered prisoners, and considered themselves such, until released by the magistrates the next day. I do not think it unworthy of notice, Sir, that the baptism of the jailer and his house, is mentioned in connexion with the washing of the apostle's stripes, as though done at the same time, and by a similar quantity of water ; and I suppose a person so tenderly concerned for their comfort and ease, as he evidently was, would make choice of any other means of performing this office of kindness, than those which would be furnished by a water, sufficiently deep, for their immersion, at midnight.—The passage in the history here referred to, you need not be informed, is as follows—" And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes ; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway." (t)

From these considerations, Sir, I presume it is sufficiently evident, to every unprejudiced mind, that the historian of the Acts of the Apostles had his reasons for not informing us, as he has done in the case of the Eunuch, that the 3000 disciples on the day of Pentecost, Saul of Tarsus, Cornelius and his house, the jailer and his house, and others who might be mentioned, " went down into" or to, " the water ;" and that these reasons are not very favourable to the doctrine of immersion.

2. It has been maintained, that the Greek word Baptize, and its root Baptio,

(r) Acts 10. 47, 48. (s) Acts 9. 19, 20. (t) Acts 10. 33.

Invariably signify to dip or immerse, in the scriptures. On this subject I beg leave to observe, in the words of the eminent divine before mentioned,

"That the body of learned Critics and Lexicographers, declare, that the original meaning of both these words is to tinge, stain, dye, or colour; and that, when it means immersion, it is only in a secondary and occasional sense; derived from the fact, that such things as are dyed, stained, or coloured, are often immersed for this end. This interpretation of the words, also, they support by such a series of quotations, as seem unanswerably to evince, that this was the original, classical meaning of these words."

"I have examined almost one hundred instances, says he, in which the word *Baptizo* and its derivatives, are mentioned in the New Testament, and four in the Septuagint; These, so far as I have observed, being all the instances, contained in both. By this examination it is to my apprehension evident, that the following things are true :

"That the primary meaning of these terms is Cleansing; the effect, not the mode of washing."

"That the mode is usually referred to incidentally, whenever the words are mentioned; and that this is always the case, whenever the ordinance of baptism is mentioned, and a reference made at the same time to the mode of administration:

"That these words, though often capable of denoting any mode of washing, whether by affusion, sprinkling, or immersion (since cleansing was familiarly accomplished by the Jews in all these ways); yet, in many instances, cannot without obvious impropriety be made to signify immersion; and in others cannot signify it at all."

I have already had occasion, Sir, to mention three passages in which these words cannot be confined to immersion. Where we read of the "Baptism of pots, cups, and tables or beds,"—where we read of "Divers Baptisms,"—and

"The following passages are particularly specific on this head.—"We read of the baptisms, (so it is in the original, Mark 7, 4.) of pots, and cups, and tables or beds," and that when the Jews came from the Market, they did not eat except they washed—in the Greek, except they baptized their hands. No one, I presume, will maintain that these were all dipped, in order to their being cleansed. "The cups and pots were washed, the beds or forms (or couches which they feared might have been rendered legally unclean, by having been sat or laid upon by some person accounted legally unclean,) were perhaps sprinkled, and the hands were dipped up to the wrists," and sometimes cleansed by the pouring on of water, as in 11 Kings, 8, 11. See Fowler's "Eastern Mirror," No. 109. That it was lawful amongst the Jews, to cleanse those things which could not be easily washed in any other way, and even some things which could, by sprinkling, is evident from Numbers 19, where it is commanded, to cleanse the tent of a person who had died therein, those who had been rendered legally unclean by being in the tent, and the vessels in that tent, by a clean person taking hyssop, and dipping it in the water of purification, and sprinkling them therewith. Therefore, I presume it is, that we read of "Divers washings"—literally rendered, "Divers Baptisms"—among the Jews. Heb. 9, 10. If they were, as the original incontrovertibly indicates, *divers* in their manners, this word cannot be confined to immersion. The fact is, the applications of water by the Jews, for the purpose of legal purification, were various in their manner; these various washings are by the apostle called *Divers Baptisms*, and consequently, any of the methods which they adopted, whether immersion, pouring, or sprinkling, are baptism in a scriptural sense of the word. Hence it is that we read also of "a question between John's disciples and the Jews, (or, as some read it, a Jew,) about purifying."—John 3, 25. But from the sequel of the history it appears, that the dispute was about baptism, probably whether that of John, or that of Christ by the instrumentality of his disciples, was the most effectual; for they made application to John for the solution of the question, and he decided in favour of the Messiah. The application of water under the Jewish dispensation, was to remove legal uncleanness; under the gospel this is not the use of baptism; and immersion partaking more of the nature of a burdensome rite than sprinkling, which is also baptism in a scriptural sense, is certainly the least suited, of any other mode, to the simplicity of the gospel dispensation.

where the "baptism" of the apostles by the descent of the Holy Ghost is said to be accomplished by the "Pouring out of the spirit." In the following passage the signification of this passage appears evidently to be confined to sprinkling. —" Moreover, brethren, I would not have you ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud; and in the sea" (u). The history here referred to, will be found Exodus 13, 21, 22, and 14, 19, 20, from which it appears.

"First; That God, or the angel of God, went before the Israelites, from the commencement of their journey at Succoth, in a pillar of cloud by day, and in a pillar of fire by night, until they were overtaken by Pharaoh and his army, on the margin of the Red Sea, beside Pi-hahiroth.

"Secondly; That the angel of God, who had hitherto gone before the camp of Israel, removed, and went behind them together with the pillar of the cloud.

"Thirdly; That the waters of the Red Sea were divided, so as to be a wall on the right hand, and on the left.

"Fourthly; That the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon dry ground.

"In the whole of this story, it is evident, there is no account whatever of that baptism of the Israelites mentioned by St. Paul in the passage quoted from I. Corinthian. There is not even an allusion to this baptism, unless it be in the declaration, that the pillar of the cloud went from before the Israelites, and stood behind them. By the waters of the Red Sea they were not even sprinkled, much less immersed, but went, as Moses expressly informs us, between two walls of water, upon dry ground. Neither is there here any account that they were baptised in the cloud; whatever this phraseology may mean.

"But what Moses has omitted, Asaph has particularly recorded in the seventh psalm, (16—30 verses.) In this account of the passage through the Red Sea, we have the baptism spoken of by St. Paul, expressly mentioned; —The clouds poured forth water upon them, or descended upon them in rain, while they were journeying through the sea. The marginal and literal reading is, the clouds were poured forth with waters. There is reason to believe from this declaration, that when the cloud passed from the van of the Israelites to the rear, or when in the language of the psalmist, they were poured forth from before the Israelites to stand behind them, the rain may have descended from the cloud during this passage. Whether this be admitted, or not, it is clear, that this is the only account of the baptism, mentioned by St. Paul, which is contained in the Old Testament. And it is equally clear, that this baptism was a cleansing, accomplished by the sprinkling of rain, and certainly not by immersion. The fancy of my antagonists, that the cloud in some manner or other, embosomed the Israelites, by resting upon them, and thus enveloping them as water envelopes a person immersed in it, would appear well, I think, in poetry; but has an aspect scarcely serious enough to claim a place in a theological discussion."(v)

It follows then, that St. Paul being the Judge, to be sprinkled is to be baptised no less than to be immersed.

Whether the design, with which I have made these remarks, Sir, be sufficiently apparent, I cannot attempt to determine; and therefore think it necessary to remark, that they have not proceeded from a disposition to call in question the validity of immersion. My design is to shew, that there is not all the reason which has been pretended, for our opponents to arrogate to themselves the title of Baptists, as though they alone administered the ordinance of Baptism in a scriptural manner: to make it appear, that it cannot be proved either by any express declaration, or legitimate and indisputable inference, from the scriptures; and that other modes have also at least an equal claim to the respect of those who pay a becoming deference to the word of God. I concede it, however, to our opponents, that immersion is a legitimate mode; but this I would be understood to do, under a conviction, that, provided the sacrament be administered with water in the name of the Holy Trinity, the mode of administration is a matter of pure indifference. For were we to allow, what is the opposite of matter of fact,—that immersion was universally practised in the primitive

(u) I. Cor. 10, 1, 2. (v) Dwight's Sys. Theol. vol. 5, p p. 351—354.

five church, yet there is certainly a force in the following analogical reasoning, from the lectures of Dr. Doddridge, which will not be easily evaded.—“ As some who insist on immersion, allow of a change in some circumstances as to the administration of the eucharist, both as to time and gesture, and the form of the elements, we may on the same principles allow of some variation here from what was generally practised at first; especially as the coldness of the climate, and the general disease of bathing among us seem to require it;” and it is in the very nature of our religion to require “mercy rather than sacrifice.”

3. It will not I presume be considered either unnecessary or improper to attempt to ascertain, whether Baptism by immersion, as a sacrament or sign of the thing signified, possesses any advantages over any other mode of administration.

It is, I believe, very generally allowed, Sir, that, as it is initiatory to the privileges of the christian church, it is symbolical of our interest as depraved and guilty creatures, in the blood of Christ, and the cleansing or sanctifying influences of his spirit. These blessings are spoken of in the scriptural language of prophecy, history, and promise, under the various ideas of washing, pouring, and sprinkling; without any preference being given to any. As washing is a term which does not necessarily imply immersion, it would perhaps be impossible to prove, that it does not frequently signify to cleanse, by pouring or sprinkling. Certain, however, it is, that the blessings of which baptism is symbolical, are frequently spoken of in these terms; and if the sign ought to represent the thing signified, they are, of course, at least, legitimate modes of administration. On the contrary, however, immersion has not even the sanction of one spiritual expression to keep it in countenance; for we never read of being plunged or immersed in either the blood of Christ, or the influences of the Spirit. Immersion, therefore, any further than cleansing is accomplished thereby, has not even the advantage of being a correct sign of the most important thing signified, by christian baptism. In favour of pouring and sprinkling, the following passages appear to be very specific—“ I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring.”(w) “ Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes.”(x) “ Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.”(y) “ We have come to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel.”(z) “ Through sanctification of the spirit, unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.”(a)

The following quotation from Dr. Adam Clarke's comment on I. Peter, 3, 21, may, in my opinion, both for critical accuracy, and practical utility, very properly conclude the discussion on the mode of administration. “ So the water of baptism, typifying the regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit, is the means of salvation to all those who receive the Holy Spirit in its quickening and cleansing efficacy. Now as the waters of the flood could not have saved Noah and his family, had they not made use of the ark; so the water of baptism saves no man but as it is the means of his getting his heart purified by the Holy Spirit, and typifying to him this purification. The ark was not immersed in the water; had it been so, they must all have perished; but it was borne upon the water, and sprinkled with the rain that fell from heaven. This text, as far as I can see, says nothing in behalf of immersion; but is rather, from the circumstance mentioned above, in favour of sprinkling. In either case, it is not the sprinkling, washing, or cleansing of the body, that can be of any avail to the salvation of the soul, but the answer of a good conscience towards God; the internal evidence, and external proof, that the soul is purified in the laver of regeneration; and the person enabled to walk in newness of life. We are therefore, strongly cautioned here not to rest in the letter, but to look for the substance.”

My knowledge of the motives, Sir, under the influence of which, you requested me to turn my attention to this subject, supersedes the necessity of my craving

(w)Isaiah 44. 3. (x)Ezek. 36. 25, 27. (y)Hebrews 10. 22. (z)Ch. 12. 24.—  
(a) I. Peter 1. 2.

your indulgence, while I offer a few practical reflections : and I trust that your conscience will be as far from reproaching you with unfaithfulness, as your heart will be from charging me with vanity, if, with all humility, and without any design either to instruct or rebuke an elder, I commence with a quotation, every line of which, I must confess, extorted from me the exclamation—" This day I remember my faults!"

" I. It is not a little to be regretted, that this ordinance is so rarely made the theme of discussion in the desk.

" Why such a difference is made (by ministers of the gospel) between two institutions of Christ—Baptism and the Lord's Supper—invested with the same authority, solemnity, and influence, I am at a loss to determine. But whatever may be the ground of this distinction, I am satisfied it cannot be a good one.—There is too much reason to believe, that not only the persons, particularly the children who have been baptized, but the parents, also, are in many instances, lawfully ignorant of the nature of this institution; the truths which it declares, the duties which it involves, and the privileges which it confers. Were these things made more frequently subjects of preaching; were they clearly illustrated, and solemnly enforced; there is the best reason to believe, that it would become a far richer, and more extensive blessing to mankind." (b)

" II. Is it not a circumstance equally to be lamented, that many of those parents who are certainly well acquainted with its nature and obligations, should, on a subject of such importance, be so unshapely indifferent?

Many, it is believed, there are, who will read their own condemnation in the following beautiful and faithful representations, drawn by masterly hands, and I trust they will also see, that Infant Baptism is an ordinance which has been frequently misrepresented, and more frequently undervalued, and misunderstood.

" It is no wonder that the great mass of children are so wicked, when so few are put under the care of Christ by humble, praying, believing, parents. Let every parent that fears God, bring up his children in that fear; and by baptism, let each be dedicated to the Holy Trinity. Whatever is solemnly consecrated to God, abides under his protection and blessing."

" Perhaps there is not, in the world, a sight more interesting, than that of an infant offered up by believing parents to God in baptism. The helpless circumstances of the child; the peculiar tenderness of the relation, existing between it and the parents; the strong expression of their faith in God, in giving up their beloved offspring to him, devoting it to his service, and engaging to train it up for his glory; the exhibition of their reliance on the blood of Christ, and the agency of the spirit of truth, to cleanse it from its original pollution; the affecting manifestation of the divine mercy and goodness in permitting us thus to offer up our children to God; united to the solemnities of the day, the place, and the occasion; form a combination of facts, and doctrines, and duties, scarcely paralleled in the present world. On the minds of parents, particularly, the impressions made cannot fail, unless through very gross stupidity, or gross wickedness, of powerfully persuading them to the duties, involved in this dedication. Of the same nature are the impressions, which will very naturally be made on those who are present at the administration. Persons, heretofore dedicated to God in baptism, will very naturally feel anew their own baptismal obligations; while those, who have dedicated them will realize, also, the privileges, to which they and their offspring have been admitted; the engagements, which they have made; and the duties, which in a peculiar manner they are required to perform.

" III. Persons, baptized in their infancy, are here solemnly reminded of their own peculiar duties; and severely reproved for their negligence in performing them.

" How many persons are there in the christian world, " who have been dedicated to God by baptism in their infancy, and who yet never thought of a single privilege, realized a single obligation, nor performed a single duty, created by this ordinance! It is perhaps questionable, whether some of them are not now ignorant, whether they have been baptized or not. How melancholy are these facts! How full are they of shame and sin! How productive ought they to be of remorse, contrition and amendment! God has called you, my young friends, into his visible kingdom in the morning of life. He has publicly sealed you as his children: and planted you in the nursery of his church. Remember

that this interesting event sprang not from chance, nor from the will of the flesh, nor from the will of man, but from God. He gave your parents the disposition and the right, to offer you up to him, and to consecrate you to his service. He has publicly acknowledged his particular relation to you; and given you this illustrious token of his kindness and mercy. Think, then, I beseech you, of the guilt of disregarding, or neglecting, this testimony of his mercy to you. All men are bound voluntarily to become his, and to consecrate themselves to his service. To this duty you are under peculiar obligations. By openly acknowledging you as his children, He has, if I may be allowed the expression, laid claim to you in a manner, which, while it demands of you the most intense gratitude, requires of you, also, to assume the character, which he has externally conferred; and with all the heart to devote your selves in the covenant of grace to his service and glory. All men under the Gospel are immovably bound to the performance of this duty. But the obligations, incumbent on you, are peculiar and pre-eminent. Let me request you to ponder this subject with deep and solemn concern; and to inquire with all earnestness of mind, whether you are not in imminent danger of sharing the doom of Capernaum, Chorazin and Bethsaida." (c)

I must now beg leave, Sir, to submit to your candour and forbearance this humble attempt on a subject confidentially of much importance, and which has employed the pens of many of the most distinguished men, for both piety and learning, that ever adorned the Christian church. I have availed myself of the labours of the distinguished few whose names I have mentioned, from a conviction, that it would have been equally presumption in me, to have made the attempt single handed, and to have obtruded any kind of a production on the notice of the public without that sanction which is properly derived from a deference to great names, and distinguished abilities. Any thing which I may suppose to be original, has in all probability been long ago presented to the public eye, and, of course, I cannot flatter myself that any thing which I have advanced in these letters will excite your astonishment, except what may possibly excite even your disgust,—the prolixity of my remarks. On this subject, however, I beg leave to screen myself from censure, under the authority of your advice—"Not to omit any thing which I thought essential to the subject," and to avail myself of the lenity connected with your knowledge of the case, with which I might have greatly exceeded even my present limits.

Had I regarded the elegancies of language, there might possibly have been a less degree of disparity between my own style, and that of the excellent citations, with which it is my chief consolation, that I have been able to fortify my cause, and adorn my pages. On this subject, I trust I can in sincerity observe; that it is as consistent with my pretensions, as it is with my acquisitions; to adopt the following quotation from the preface to your "Sermon on the lamented demise of his late Majesty." "The style is such as I use on ordinary occasions—perhaps in general free from glaring inaccuracies."

To conclude: the only thing in which I can flatter myself is, that those who will disregard, and perhaps despise, my labours, will, in general, have no objections to an interest in my prayers; and I, therefore, pray the Father of the spirits of all flesh; that both the opponents and the advocates of Infant Baptism by Sprinkling, may "have their hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, as their bodies have been washed with pure water." May we all be favoured with the abundant influences of that Spirit, of whose gracious operations we all agree, that Baptism is merely symbolical, and be thereby enabled to "walk in newness of life!" Being fully persuaded that whatever may be your opinion of my labours, you will heartily unite in my prayers.

I am,

Revd. and very dear Sir,  
Your's most respectfully,  
and affectionately,

GEORGE JACKSON.

Sackville, Westmoreland,  
May 21st, 1822.